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A New Day in *PROBATION*

**PROBATION:
THROUGH THE COURT FOR THE COMMUNITY**

Creating the Community Safety Impact Model

By Deb Minardi, Deputy Probation Administrator

According to Statesman Marcus Tullius Cicero (born 106 BC), “The safety of the people shall be the highest law.” How wise Cicero was for his assessment of the “highest law.” Thousands of years later we still strive to accomplish this vision. Probation’s mission calls on all of us in the agency to enhance public safety. Every time we fail at our mission, there is another victim who pays the cost, whether that victim is society or our neighbor. The reality of these stakes compels all of us within the criminal justice field to do whatever it takes. Simply put, we can no longer afford to ignore the data regarding what enhances community safety. Research results show a 20% to 40% reduction in recidivism when applying certain practices, which equates to fewer victims. Similarly, we are part of a judicial system that is founded on concepts that include proof beyond a reasonable doubt and there must be evidence to convict. I challenge any naysayer of evidence based-practices (EBP) to

show their documentation for a more effective approach. We know more about offender behavior today than we did yesterday, and chances are great we will know even more tomorrow. I applaud each of you who are moving down this new road. For many of us, this transformation answers the question of why we got into the business by responding “to make a difference.”

It is on Probation’s long-standing commitment to safe communities that the Community Safety Impact Model was created as a blueprint for transformation. While I have humorously referred to Probation’s efforts over the past two years as an extreme makeover, the hard work it has required is no joke. The Probation’s **Community Safety Impact Model** encompasses a public safety approach to case management. Adult and juvenile offenders are prioritized for assessment, supervision and treatment services according to their risk of re-offending.

What better way to enhance community safety than to provide the court with meaningful information that encompasses an offender’s risk of recidivism, providing for effective sentencing and dispositional outcomes. The Community Safety Impact Model delineates three primary components in working with offenders/juveniles: a) accurate assessments, b) intervention (which equals reducing recidivism through supervision and services) and c) outcome measures. **Community-Based Intervention (CBI)** is the supervision approach created and specifically designed for offenders/juveniles who are at a high to high-moderate risk of re-offending. It combines intensive supervision and treatment resources to maximize community safety and reduce the potential for recidivism. **Community-Based Resource (CBR)** is designed for offenders/juveniles who are at a moderate to low risk of re-offending. Community supervision is most successful

supervision and services to offender risk. Likewise, we recognize that **services** must be accessible while under community supervision for optimum success.

This is just the beginning and our work is far from over. The Community Safety Impact Model will serve as a guide into the future of Community-Based Programs and Services with our ongoing mission: “Safety of the People.”





Case Planning: A Tool For Effective Case Management

By Monica Miles-Steffens, Probation Education Manager

As Nebraska Probation Administration continues to change its approach in working with offenders, one of the new tools being implemented is assessment-driven case planning.

Probation officers now conduct numerous evidence-based assessments that help identify offenders' highest areas of criminogenic risk/needs. Criminogenic refers to those behaviors, proven by research, that pose the highest risk of recidivism, such as companions, education/employment, substance abuse, family marital issues, etc. The information gathered through these assessments and a motivational interview set the foundation for case planning.

Case planning refers to the process the officer goes through after identifying the highest areas of risk/needs.

The officer will sit down with the offender and develop goals and objectives that will help the offender reduce their criminogenic risk as well as meet the orders of the court. The officer and offender then use the case plan, as a way to measure progress throughout the time the offender is on probation. Ultimately, the goal is to help affect positive long-lasting behavior change.

What are the advantages of case planning? Case planning provides a structured approach to overall case management. All offenders will have some form of a case plan. Very low and low-risk offenders will have simplistic case plans that assist them in meeting the conditions of probation, while medium to very high-risk offenders will have more sophisticated case plans that help them achieve specific goals. The case planning process helps the officer/offender partnership prioritize which area(s) of

risk/needs should be addressed first. Officers use motivational interviewing skills to identify how ready the offender is to make a change in certain areas. The case plan also documents the specific interventions the offender will engage in to address certain risk/needs.

Case planning documents interventions and progress. The case plan provides ongoing documentation of what the offender is accomplishing on probation. If the offender is not progressing, it provides documentation of the interventions and sanctions attempted.

Case planning provides the offender with concrete expectations. For medium to very high-risk cases, officers develop the case plan with the offender. This creates buy-in, as well as sets clear expectations and deadlines for the offender.

Case Planning guides decision-making. The case plan guides the officer in targeting appropriate interventions to an offender's specific risk/needs, therefore, maximizing limited resources.

Assessment-driven case planning is an essential piece of the transformation of Probation utilizing evidence-based practices. Case plans will assist Probation in tracking long-term outcomes such as reduction in recidivism and success of programming, with the ultimate goal being an increase in public safety.



Community Supervision of Sex Offenders

By Toni Ahrendt, Domestic Violence Programs Services Specialist

There are approximately 400 offenders on probation for sexually-based offenses. These range from Internet enticement cases to child sexual assault. For some people, the idea of sex offenders being supervised in the community is alarming; however, recent studies show community supervision for some sex offenders is more successful in reducing recidivism than basic incarceration. The Center for Sex Offender Management (CSOM) reports that community-based cognitive behavioral

programming has a better effect on decreasing recidivism than similar programming in prison or prison alone (www.csom.org). Nebraska State Probation has used this information and research from various other sources to guide its new initiatives focused on the supervision of sex offenders in the community.

The first step in this new initiative was to implement a specialized assessment for the sex-offending population in order to determine those offenders who would be more successful on community supervision. The Vermont Assessment for Sex Offender Risk (VASOR) was chosen by a committee of officers and managers within the Probation System. Officers were trained and the tool implemented across the state in early 2008. This tool is comprised of two primary scales: the first looks at the offender's risk of re-offending and the second scale looks at the risk for violence from the individual. Together they provide the officer with an idea of

those offenders who may be successful under community supervision. Specifically, it looks at the elements of the offense, the victims targeted by the offender and the offender's amenability to treatment, amongst others. Probation is also looking into a juvenile-specific tool that could be used on offenders age 17 and younger. The results of the assessment, as well as information gathered from a detailed sexual history interview, and in some areas, a specialized evaluation, are compiled into the presentence investigation.

With the information from the presentence investigation, the officer may recommend specific individualized conditions of probation for the offender. If the offender is placed on probation, specialized policies and practices have been initiated in order to provide for increased victim and community safety. In urban areas, the offender will be placed on the caseload of a specialized sex offender officer. In non-urban areas, the offender will be placed on the

caseload of an officer skilled in working with high-risk offenders who has access to a resource in their district for sex offenders. Officers will work with each sex offender in creating a case plan that is individualized to the risk/needs of the offender. This case plan may assist the offender in obtaining appropriate employment, completing sex offender and/or substance abuse treatment, as well as relapse prevention activities, which have all shown to decrease recidivism.

In order to fully implement the specialized practices, Probation received a grant to provide training for officers on the supervision of sex offenders in the community. This grant is a collaborative project with Parole and the Office of Juvenile Services. Three 3-day regional trainings have been planned, two focused on the supervision of adult sex offenders and one on the supervision of juvenile sex offenders. With this knowledge in hand, appropriate assessments and guiding practices, probation officers will be better prepared to supervise and hold sex offenders accountable, as well as provide an increased level of safety for victims and the community as a whole.

SEX OFFENDER DATA (1/1/08—6/30/08)

23	— # of sex offenders on probation arrested for new offenses
9	— # of sex offenders on probation arrested for technical violations
413	— # of sex offenders on probation
29,715	— total number of offenders on active probation
171	— # of offenders in specialized sex offender caseload



MRT Groups Enhance Caseload Supervision

*By Julie Ritthaler,
Community-Based Intervention Officer, District 16*

Moral Reconciliation Therapy (MRT) is a cognitive behavior treatment strategy designed to enhance self-image, facilitate the development of higher stages of moral reasoning and lower offender recidivism. This is done through group participation, individual homework assignments and one-on-one consultation with the group facilitator. Reconciliation is a term used in psychology in the 1930s that describes “conation” as the conscious process of decision-making and purposeful behavior.

Thus, Moral Reconciliation is the process of changing

conscious decision-making to higher levels of moral reasoning. MRT has proven to be successful in enhancing life purpose, facilitating increased social support and giving participants more perceived control over their lives. More than 120 outcome studies have shown that the more MRT steps of the 12-step program an offender completes, the greater his/her moral reasoning increased.

When participants’ moral reasoning increased, their rate of recidivism was reduced by one-third. MRT is recognized around the country as an “Evidenced-Based Practices” program by numerous governmental agencies and treatment authorities. What makes MRT group facilitation so effective? Here are some reasons. MRT groups can effectively treat certain problem areas better than individual counseling. Examples of such problem areas are substance abusers,

alcoholics, and anti-social personality disorders. Groups enable the facilitator to follow a specific treatment approach that addresses issues impacting the offenders’ immediate lives. Facilitators learn to recognize and avoid discussions that tend to perpetuate an offender’s problems and instead focus on confronting and treating those problems. Groups encourage positive peer pressure that hold members accountable for their actions in and outside of group. Group members become a positive support system for one another, seeing similarities in one another that can lead to

MRT groups are an effective and efficient way for officers to work with offenders...

more open, uninhibited sharing. They

begin to feel comfortable and realize everyone has problems, and there is a better way to work on individual problems. While completing MRT steps, goals and treatment strategies are discovered and developed that can be utilized in individual case planning targeting criminogenic risk factors, thus reducing recidivism.

MRT is an open-ended group, which means offenders enter and exit at various stages of group. All group members are working on different steps allowing those in the higher stages to mentor to those in lower stages. When offenders see other members succeed in completing MRT steps, this gives them hope. Moreover, group participation allows group members to learn, practice and model appropriate behaviors. Possessing

valuable social skills such as respect for others, listening, following rules, empathy for others and giving and receiving feedback are necessary in the development of cognitive restructuring.

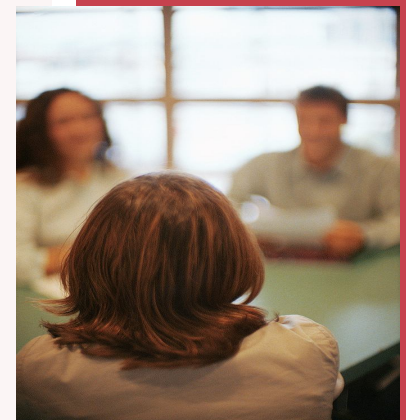
Not only are groups effective in working on the offender’s problem areas, they are also an efficient way to make contact with multiple offenders at one time. By doing so, an officer’s time is spent more efficiently, while making quality contact with offenders. The wonderful thing about MRT is that once trained, the facilitator does not need to spend outside time preparing for groups. When a group is ready to begin, the facilitator can simply get his/her MRT workbook and the counselor’s handbook and they are ready.

Incorporating MRT groups is an effective and efficient way for officers to work with offenders in addressing an offender’s criminogenic risk factors and assists in case planning. Groups make it economical by allowing officers to see many offenders at one time and still address individual problem areas. This allows better use of an officer’s time, assists in supervision strategies and reduces offender recidivism. MRT challenges offenders to gain new insight while changing their behavior and identifying how their behavior not only impacts their lives but also the lives of others and society.

50 YEARS



The Nebraska Probation System is celebrating 50 years of service to communities across the state. Probation professionals make lasting changes in local communities through assisting both juvenile and adult offenders in becoming productive members of society. Nebraska Probation has begun to achieve this through individualized approaches focused on the specific needs and risk levels of each offender. By providing this unique intervention, Nebraska Probation has been able to impact community safety for the better.



Message from the Administrator

By Ellen Fabian Brokofsky, State Probation Administrator



In early August I was very much surprised to receive the Outstanding Probation Executive Award for 2008 from the National Association of Probation Executives (NAPE), in association with Sam Houston University's School of Criminal Justice. Reflecting on the how and why one can be so deserving of this important award, I came to a realization I want to share with all of you.

"This award belongs to all of us in the Nebraska Probation System for it is all of us who earned it."
— Ellen Fabian Brokofsky
State Probation Administrator

In October of 2005, I asked all of Probation's managers to convene in Columbus for our first all-inclusive management meeting. As those of you who attended that meeting may recall, the managers had previously polled all of their staffs asking for complaints and concerns to bring to the meeting. The managers also asked for staff to forge what they believed to be Probation's Vision and Mission for the future. After compiling the System's thoughts and wishes at that meeting, a new Vision, Mission and Strategic Plan were created for the future. Basically, it was a 15-year plan of transformation; a 15-year plan that the Nebraska Probation System needed to complete in five years!

Why did we need to move so quickly you ask? Because for the first time in many years Probation had a "moment in time" when we had the support and leadership of all three branches of government, statutory provisions for change (the Community Corrections Act) and funding opportunities. In retrospect, pushing the system to move so fast was one of the hardest leadership decisions of my career as I saw how all of you tirelessly worked to learn all our new ways of doing business while still maintaining your existing workloads. Your ability to keep this System operational while it endured the introduction of new programming and procedures was and is unparalleled.

Although we've always had a strong Probation System and provided excellent service to our state for over 50 years, we were challenged to build on this record and better it by incorporating new research-based initiatives into our everyday business. Although there were many obstacles to change, you not only endured the change, you succeeded. Keep in mind you not only implemented these changes, many of you actively participated on committees that created the template for change. Here are just a few of the changes you accomplished in the last three years that have brought national attention to our System and our state:

- Statewide training in Motivational Interviewing and Case Planning
- Cognitive behavioral training for certain staff in all probation districts
- Development and operations of seven (7) Reporting Centers
- Development of the Community Safety Impact Models for Adults and Juveniles
- Implementation of the Standardized Model for the Delivery of Substance Abuse Services and the Fee for Service Voucher Program
- Revised new probation officer training and developed advanced training for officers
- Complete transformation of the presentence and predisposition investigations to include introduction of state-of-the-art proxy and risk-reduction assessment instruments
- Trained on and adapted to major adjustments to our NPMIS system
- Delivery of a statewide probation officer conference and a support staff conference; delivery of an addictions conference for criminal justice and substance abuse providers
- Implementation of Specialized Substance Abuse Supervision (SSAS) program
- Implementation of electronic reporting
- Implementation of the RISE program
- Creation of adult and juvenile community-based intervention as an approach to intensive supervision.

And this is only a partial listing of your accomplishments! Any one of these initiatives could have been a three-year project on its own.

Without hesitation, I recognize your incredible work and share this most prestigious award with all of you who have truly earned it.

I am proud of the people and the accomplishments of the Nebraska Probation System and look forward to serving you in the future.

Office of Probation Administration
Room 1207, State Capitol
P.O. Box 98910
Lincoln, NE 68509
Phone: 402-471-2141
Fax: 402-471-2197
www.supremecourt.ne.gov